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(as prepared for delivery)

Every child in America has dreamt of soaring through the clouds like an eagle, transcending the speed of sound or reaching into the heavens to arrive on the moon or maybe mars.

The images of fighter jets flying upside down or performing loop-after-loop capture every child's imagination - and a even a few of us older folks.

These images are what many of us equate with the United State's Air Force.

But they tell only a small piece of the story.

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soldiers in harm's way are properly supplied and arrive at their destinations ready to protect America's interests, anywhere in the world.

Today, more than 30,000 men and women are on duty abroad, protecting us and serving as the eyes for our ground forces. Thousands more are ever-vigilant, keeping watch for an unwelcome surprise at home.

From pilots, to mechanics, to flight surgeons and air traffic controllers, these men and women are always ready for action.

In California there are ten active duty, reserve and air guard bases. They perform nearly every type of mission, from space launches at Vandenberg, to airlift mobility at Travis, to testing and evaluation at Edwards, to reconnaissance at Beale, to combat fighters at our Guard/Reserve bases.

The 60,000 men and women assigned to bases in California and the more than 100,000 Air Force retirees here in the Sacramento area have elevated the cause of defending freedom above all else.

They are each-and-every one heroes, and they deserve our heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

It matters not how we may feel about today's military conflicts abroad, the members of our military: Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard and Air Force put their lives on the line for America everyday.

It is our solemn duty to honor them, to cherish them and to ensure that when they return from active duty they have the resources and opportunities they deserve to live full and productive lives.

Each soldier, sailor and airman has earned this special distinction, and we must do everything

we can to respect and pay tribute for their service to us.

I am proud to join with you today to honor the men and women of the Air Force for their sixty year legacy of integrity, service and excellence.

-Lt. Governor Garamendi